



Gorillas with the Rushegura group in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in Uganda. This group was one of the first in the area habituated for gorilla tracking tourism. Photo: Jason Houston/USAID

EAST AFRICA

ECONOMICS OF NATURAL CAPITAL IN EAST AFRICA

East Africa contains some of the African continent's most vast and iconic landscapes. These biodiversity-rich areas are critical to the region's nature-based tourism industry, which contributes significantly to East Africa's gross domestic product. Many East Africa's wildlife habitats exist across national boundaries and hence require collaboration to address the challenges of the conservation of wildlife and the habitats they depend on.

Wildlife habitats have become fragmented by rapid urban, rural, and industrial development, which, in turn, has created new avenues for illegal wildlife trafficking. Additionally, corruption and the lack of political will has enabled natural resources to be harvested at unsustainable rates. Climate change is projected to further aggravate the existing drivers of natural resource conservation threats through increasingly erratic weather patterns.

The Economics of Natural Capital in East Africa project supports USAID and the East African Community's (EAC) strategic priorities for harmonizing policy and legal frameworks, sustainable management of key transboundary ecosystems, anti-poaching, and combating wildlife trafficking, as well as learning and leadership for biodiversity conservation.

OUR WORK

USAID works to increase the real and perceived value of East Africa's natural capital. At the core of the project is the understanding that a regional effort is needed to address national-level problems. The project focuses on strengthening the EAC regional policy dialogue and the evidence base on transboundary natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. It also provides research, data, and economic analysis on the current and potential value of natural capital in East Africa to the EAC, partner states, regional governments and institutions, civil society organizations, and end users. The project uses a rigorous assessment on the value of natural capital in East Africa to create evidence-based outreach materials for targeted audiences and conduct extensive stakeholder engagement. USAID partners with Environmental Incentives to closely collaborate with experts from the EAC Secretariat and Member States, conservation organizations and private sector actors to:

- (i) create new knowledge by co-developing natural capital assessments.
- (ii) generate evidence-based material from the assessments.
- (iii) support stakeholder learning and advocacy.
- (iv) facilitate results-based dialogue grounded in best practices for the conservation sector
- (v) support decision-making processes by building regional and local capacity to produce and interpret natural capital information.

By increasing the perceived value of living wildlife, the project is fostering collaborative management and conservation of transboundary natural resources and contributing towards the reduction of wildlife poaching and trafficking. A greater understanding of East Africa's environmental resources will support the collective goals of USAID and the EAC to enable a policy environment for improved conservation and management of natural capital in East Africa.

RESULTS

This 26-months' study calculated the immense economic value of natural capital in East Africa at \$11.3 billion annually. Much of this value lies in healthy ecosystems providing services that governments and the private sector do not have to pay for: a steady flow of water, filtering pollutants, preventing erosion, pollinating crops, and boosting resilience to climate change. EAC leaders and policy experts from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda have reviewed these findings and recommendations, affirmed the Synthesis Report, and adopted a shared Action Plan - both of which will be advanced for approval at the 10th Meeting of the EAC Sectoral Council on Tourism and Wildlife Management that is scheduled in the first quarter of 2022.

BUDGET: \$2.94 million

DURATION: 2019-2022

ACTIVITY LOCATIONS

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Environmental Incentives, LLC
Anchor Environmental Consultants

KEY PARTNERS

East Africa Community

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